

STAGNATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

It is fashionable just now for those who hardly know what they are talking about to characterize the teaching in some of our Seminaries as utterly unsuited to the times, the demands of the age, the conditions of humanity. As the Seminaries are now opening it may not be amiss to pause a moment and see if the detractors are right or if the instruction is what it should be.

The glib talk about the minister's relation to civic, economic, and social problems has in it much more of speciousness than of common sense. The growing complexity of social and civic life is demanding, it is claimed, more and more of the ethical function of the pulpit. The minister must be prepared to meet this demand. He must be a "preacher of righteousness," that is, as the outside world interprets it, of the observance of law, and to be such he must understand fully all the relations out of which duty springs. The suggestion is taking and the words catchy. It is no wonder that many are misled by them. It is no wonder, especially, that some young men looking towards the ministry are made to think that the wisdom of years and the consecration of a life time to the study of the best methods are nothing but oldfogyism, that theological instruction has stagnated, and that new life and new blood should be poured into our long established schools.

Is the minister to be a "preacher of righteousness" in the sense of that phrase which the world uses? Is he not rather the proclaimer of Christ's righteousness, and is not his commission limited to offering that righteousness and in Christ's stead beseeching men to be reconciled unto God by accepting Christ and finding in him the true life? Is he not to exalt Christ as the substitute for the sinner and thereby both source and example of all godly living? Has he a right to place righteousness upon any other ground than that of the Bible presentation of it? Is it not through the gospel, the power of God unto salvation, that men are to be lifted into the higher life? What business, then has he in forgetting his great commission so that he may come down and take part in the smaller range of mere human ethics, important as is the latter in man's relation to man?

The primary end of the theological seminary is to prepare men to preach the gospel of Christ, not the gospel of "social salvation," to lead men to Christ rather than to better man's environment. It is to acquaint them with the duties of ambassadorship, to make them familiar with the commission entrusted to them, and to equip them for the most effective possible delivery of their authoritative message. They are to be taught to convince men out of God's Word of the need of a personal Saviour, of the way of salvation rather than of the methods of sociological reform. To neglect this primary end and to exalt the ethical relations of certain civic and social facts is to put contempt upon God's Word and its great principle of regeneration by the Spirit, the only way of securing a genuine higher life.

None will doubt that the minister should have a deep and abiding interest in the great problems of civic and social life which confront all of us in these latter days. He should take part in every true re-

form and be ever ready and prepared to bear a large part in righting the conditions of mankind. This, however, is his right and duty on the same basis as that of any other good citizen. He is not dealing with these matters in his ambassadorial relations, and he should be careful not to surrender the latter in order to enter the arena in behalf of the former. A recent writer has well expressed it when, attributing the decrease of students in theological seminaries to this, he adds that the student has his ardor cooled by "the admonition that the business of the twentieth century minister is to lead in sociological reform instead of trying to convince of sin and show the way of salvation. Leading men to Christ has been superseded by leading the poor to a better environment. Hygiene instead of heaven—food rather than forgiveness—country air in place of creeds and confessions of faith—constitute the mission of the modern minister."

COMMENDING FRIENDS.

A Roman Catholic paper has recently given its readers long editorials full of commendation of Belgium and Spain. These kingdoms have been upheld as marvellous for their strength, prosperity, ability to handle great problems which have confronted them, and other evidences of internal power. It is not unnatural that such encomiums should come to such nations from such a source. Belgium and Spain, more than all other countries of Europe and America, are under the spell of Romanism. The Church dominates the civil power more completely in them than in even Italy or Austria. It is a well-known fact that Cardinal Gibbons defends the atrocities of the Congo State, which is only Belgium in Africa. The King of Spain was recently guilty of a most indecent tergiversation in the matter of the marriage of his cousin to a Protestant princess, encouraging and helping him to secure his wife and then consenting to the Church-State demand that the young man be deprived therefor of his princely rights.

It is hard to believe that those who commend such people and governments are any better than those people and it is incredible, too, that those commending them would, if they had the power, do anything else than what those friends are doing or would do. They would openly acknowledge citizenship in Rome and fealty to the Pope as above citizenship in their country and loyalty to its government. The maintenance of the doctrine of the Pope's civil power means nothing else, and the praise of Belgium and Spain shows approval of their atrocities and bigotry. The light is coming, however, even in those darkened lands. Anti-clericalism is fast asserting itself. In the recent disturbances in Catalonia, the restiveness of the people under the Roman yoke was a marked feature. It is to be hoped that the revulsion will not take the usual form of disinclination towards all religions.

Every intelligent congregation installing a minister understands that it has elected a leader. If he whines because there are too many bosses in the church, he confesses, without knowing it, that he was not born to be a leader of men and therefore not qualified to be at the head of a church.